



For Immediate Release:

Chairperson Lisa Carter made the following statement at the weekly Thursday, July 18, 2019 meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners at 3 p.m.

“This is going to surprise some people: I am opposed to the use of facial recognition by the Detroit Police Department and will vote against the policy directive proposed by Chief James Craig. The technology is flawed, and those flaws primarily relate to bias against African-Americans, Latinos, and other people of color. Such a flawed tool has no place in a police department servicing a majority black and brown city like ours – or in any agency concerned about fairness and justice until the technology is fixed.

Surprise is likely because, in the last week, people have confused my commitment to run an orderly, productive meeting as support for facial recognition use by law enforcement.

Obviously, the two are not the same.

In a key way, though, they are related: our Board cannot have serious, reflective, mature consideration of public safety issues like facial recognition or make respectable decisions about those matters without an orderly process. We also cannot expect the public to follow the issues or our decisions – particularly controversial or complex ones – without an orderly process.

The Board of Police Commissioners is mandated by the City Charter with “supervisory control and oversight” of the police department. Our 11 members deal with serious and often grave issues with far-reaching impact on the daily lives of police officers and city residents and their families, as well as the public safety and reputation of the entire city.

As chair, I do not want our work hampered or devalued with unneeded interruptions, shouting matches, cardboard signs, and other disruptive – and sometimes staged – grandstanding. Democracy needs advocacy and passion, but it does not need a sideshow.

Given all the places on the agenda where a Board member may speak each and every week, no Commissioner needs to be disruptive like last Thursday. Any Commissioner could have asked about my goals or complained about lacking an office at several other places on the agenda, rather than disrupt a presentation to a community leader, which our Board only does at the monthly meeting.

As the video shows, facial recognition was only raised once the disruption started. However, had any Commissioner sincerely wanted to ask or make comments about it, the agenda has places for that too – such as the standing Chief of Police Report.

All 11 police commissioners voluntarily take on the hard work of civilian oversight. There is no salary, so everyone makes a special commitment to be prepared on the issues, attend meetings, make decisions, and serve the public. We meet every Thursday, except holidays, and most commissioners have outstanding records of attendance and service.

We do not always agree, and I know not every Board member will agree with me in opposing facial recognition once Chief Craig submits his revised policy directive and it goes through the standard practices to appear on the agenda for a vote. However, as a Police Commissioner and as Chair, I am committed to upholding an orderly process to ensure our work and decisions are clear for the record and for the public.”

Created by the 1974 City Charter, the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners has supervisory authority and oversight over the Police Department. Under the 2012 Charter, the Board is comprised of 11 civilian members; Detroiters elect seven members by district and the mayor appoints and the city council confirms four at-large members. All board members serve as unpaid volunteers.



The current members are Willie E. Bell, Elizabeth Brooks, Darryl D. Brown, Shirley A. Burch, Willie E. Burton, Lisa Carter, William M. Davis, Eva Garza Dewaelsche, Evette Griffie, Jim Holley, and Annie Holt.

The Detroit Board of Police Commissioners meets weekly on Thursday at 3 p.m. at Detroit Public Safety Headquarters, 1301 Third Street, except for the second Thursday of the month when it holds community meetings at 6:30 p.m. at various locations.

For the Board meeting schedule, video, minutes, and other information, visit the website at detroitmi.gov/bopc.